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BROOKE, Rupert.  
The old vicarage, Grant-  
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The Old Vicarage  
Grantchester : by  
Rupert Brooke

With a Woodcut by Noel Rooke

London : Sidgwick & Jackson, Limited  
3 Adam Street, Adelphi, W.C. 1916



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The Old Vicarage, Grantchester  
A Woodcut by Noel Rooke



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## *The Old Vicarage, Grantchester*

*Café des Westens  
Berlin, May 1912*

**J**UST now the lilac is in bloom,  
All before my little room ;  
And in my flower-beds, I think,  
Smile the carnation and the pink ;  
And down the borders, well I know,  
The poppy and the pansy blow . . .  
Oh ! there the chestnuts, summer through,  
Beside the river make for you  
A tunnel of green gloom, and sleep  
Deeply above ; and green and deep  
The stream mysterious glides beneath,  
Green as a dream and deep as death.  
—Oh, damn ! I know it ! And I know  
How the May fields all golden show,  
And when the day is young and sweet,  
Gild gloriously the bare feet  
That run to bathe . . .

*Du lieber Gott !*

## *The Old Vicarage*

---

Here am I, sweating, sick, and hot,  
And there the shadowed waters fresh  
Lean up to embrace the naked flesh.  
*Temperamentvoll* German Jews  
Drink beer around ;—and *there* the dews  
Are soft beneath a morn of gold.  
Here tulips bloom as they are told ;  
Unkempt about those hedges blows  
An English unofficial rose ;  
And there the unregulated sun  
Slopes down to rest when day is done,  
And wakes a vague unpunctual star,  
A slippered Hesper ; and there are  
Meads towards Haslingfield and Coton  
Where *das Betreten's* not *verboten*. . . .

*εἴθε γεινοίμην* . . . would I were  
In Grantchester, in Grantchester !—  
Some, it may be, can get in touch  
With Nature there, or Earth, or such.  
And clever modern men have seen  
A Faun a-peeping through the green,  
And felt the Classics were not dead,  
To glimpse a Naiad's reedy head,

Or hear the Goat-foot piping low : . . .  
But these are things I do not know.  
I only know that you may lie  
Day long and watch the Cambridge sky,  
And, flower-lulled in sleepy grass,  
Hear the cool lapse of hours pass,  
Until the centuries blend and blur  
In Grantchester, in Grantchester. . . .  
Still in the dawnlit waters cool  
His ghostly Lordship swims his pool,  
And tries the strokes, essays the tricks,  
Long learnt on Hellespont, or Styx.  
Dan Chaucer hears his river still  
Chatter beneath a phantom mill.  
Tennyson notes, with studious eye,  
How Cambridge waters hurry by. . . .  
And in that garden, black and white,  
Creep whispers through the grass all night ;  
And spectral dance, before the dawn,  
A hundred Vicars down the lawn ;  
Curates, long dust, will come and go  
On lissom, clerical, printless toe ;  
And oft between the boughs is seen  
The sly shade of a Rural Dean. . . .

## *The Old Vicarage*

---

Till, at a shiver in the skies,  
Vanishing with Satanic cries,  
The prim ecclesiastic rout  
Leaves but a startled sleeper-out,  
Grey heavens, the first bird's drowsy calls,  
The falling house that never falls.

God ! I will pack, and take a train,  
And get me to England once again !  
For England's the one land, I know,  
Where men with Splendid Hearts may go ;  
And Cambridgeshire, of all England,  
The shire for Men who Understand ;  
And of *that* district I prefer  
The lovely hamlet Grantchester.  
For Cambridge people rarely smile,  
Being urban, squat, and packed with guile ;  
And Royston men in the far South  
Are black and fierce and strange of mouth ;  
At Over they fling oaths at one,  
And worse than oaths at Trumpington,  
And Ditton girls are mean and dirty,  
And there's none in Harston under thirty,

And folks in Shelford and those parts  
Have twisted lips and twisted hearts,  
And Barton men make Cockney rhymes,  
And Coton's full of nameless crimes,  
And things are done you'd not believe  
At Madingley, on Christmas Eve.  
Strong men have run for miles and miles,  
When one from Cherry Hinton smiles ;  
Strong men have blanched, and shot their wives  
Rather than send them to St. Ives ;  
Strong men have cried like babes, bydam,  
To hear what happened at Babraham.  
But Grantchester ! ah, Grantchester !  
There's peace and holy quiet there,  
Great clouds along pacific skies,  
And men and women with straight eyes,  
Lithe children lovelier than a dream,  
A bosky wood, a slumbrous stream,  
And little kindly winds that creep  
Round twilight corners, half asleep.  
In Grantchester their skins are white ;  
They bathe by day, they bathe by night ;  
The women there do all they ought ;  
The men observe the Rules of Thought.

## *The Old Vicarage*

---

They love the Good ; they worship Truth ;  
They laugh uproariously in youth ;  
(And when they get to feeling old,  
They up and shoot themselves, I'm told) . . .

Ah God ! to see the branches stir  
Across the moon at Grantchester !  
To smell the thrilling-sweet and rotten  
Unforgettable, unforgotten  
River-smell, and hear the breeze  
Sobbing in the little trees.  
Say, do the elm-clumps greatly stand,  
Still guardians of that holy land ?  
The chestnuts shade, in reverend dream,  
The yet unacademic stream ?  
Is dawn a secret shy and cold  
Anadyomene, silver-gold ?  
And sunset still a golden sea  
From Haslingfield to Madingley ?  
And after, ere the night is born,  
Do hares come out about the corn ?  
Oh, is the water sweet and cool  
Gentle and brown, above the pool ?



And laughs the immortal river still  
Under the mill, under the mill ?  
Say, is there Beauty yet to find ?  
And Certainty ? and Quiet kind ?  
Deep meadows yet, for to forget  
The lies, and truths, and pain ? . . . oh ! yet  
Stands the Church clock at ten to three ?  
And is there honey still for tea ?

*The Old Vicarage, Grantchester*  
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